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SUBJECT: MEDIA APPROVES AMBASSADOR'S HCMC POLICY SPEECH

1.(U) Summary: Ambassador Marine's first major policy speech in southern Vietnam was well-received, garnering a large and diverse audience and extensive television and print media coverage. Over 300 guests attended the September 20 event at the Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) Union of Friendship Organizations Hall, including government officials, scholars, businesspeople, diplomats, students and the media. All national and HCMC-based newspapers and television stations, as well as provincial press from neighboring Dong Nai and Binh Duong provinces covered the event. In the two days following the speech, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) noted more than twenty television, print and online newspaper reports. Many of the print reports were lengthy, over 2000 words, with front page coverage dedicated to the more sensitive issues touched upon in the speech, including human rights, military cooperation, and corruption in Vietnam.
End Summary.

2.(U) Vietnam television (VTV), HCMC Television (HTV), Dong Nai Television (DTV) and Binh Duong Television (BTV) all carried excerpts from the speech in their news coverage, with HTV dedicating approximately five minutes to both the speech and to the Ambassador's participation in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new U.S. Student Advising Office later that same day.

3.(U) In general, media reports emphasized the Ambassador's statements on achievements in U.S.-Vietnam bilateral trade, as well as cooperation on public health issues, assistance to people with disabilities, and seeking those missing in action, in addition to cultural and educational exchange activities. The nation's most popular online newspaper Vietnam Net and the national English language daily Vietnam News also carried the Ambassador's comments about seeking progress on human rights and religious freedom issues. VN Express Online's coverage reported that the United States and Vietnam have a growing military to military relationship.

¶4. Sample newspaper headlines included the following: U.S. Envoy Says Ties With Vietnam Now in New Stage Of Development (Saigon Times); US Envoy Hopeful About Trade Status For Vietnam (Thanh Nien); US-Vietnam Relations to Move Forward in a Strategic Manner (Lao Dong); PNTR is Not a Diplomatic Gift (VN Express); Vietnam's Progress in Human Rights and Religious Freedom: U.S. Ambassador (Vietnam Net); A New Wave of Investment is Coming to Vietnam: U.S. Ambassador (Saigon Giai Phong); No Reason for the United States not to Approve PNTR with Vietnam, says U.S. Ambassador (Vietnam News Agency, Nguoi Lao Dong); U.S.-Vietnam Ties Reach a New Stage (Tuoi Tre); U.S., Vietnam Look to Boost Multi-faceted Relationship (Vietnam News); U.S. and Vietnam Share Important National Interests (Phap Luat).

¶5. Several major dailies including Thanh Nien (Young People), Tuoi Tre (Youth), Vietnam News Agency, and Nguoi Lao Dong (Worker) emphasized the positive stance on establishing permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with Vietnam quoting Ambassador Marine as saying, "There is no reason the U.S Congress will not pass the draft bill on the Permanent Normal Trade Relation status for Vietnam." Media sources also reported

on the Ambassador's comment that he also hopes that PNTR status will be approved prior to the President's visit to Vietnam in November.

¶6. Interestingly, most newspapers, including Phap Luat (Law), Vietnam Net, Saigon Giai Phong (Saigon Marketing) , and Tuoi Tre, chose to print in full a paragraph from the speech dealing with corruption in Vietnam (full text of the speech may be found on the U.S. Consulate General website at: http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/uploads/images/11QDX7_FbIFSG_Pc00QUsg/09212006.pdf) PAS contacts confided that media sources highlighted the Ambassador's comments on corruption due to the significance of the topic for average Vietnamese, and the recent GVN emphasis on addressing corruption.

¶7. The tone of media reports was generally positive and straightforward, with no additional commentary from editors. Coverage of the speech is expected to have a positive effect on Vietnamese readers and government officials, as it emphasized the strength of the bilateral relationship and affirmed U.S. policy vis--vis Vietnam. PAS media contacts gave direct positive feedback to PAS regarding the speech and thanked PAS for organizing the event.

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